

**Call to Worship – Psalm 29:1-11**

We are here this morning to worship God.

We are not here to *give* him worth that he does not already have.

We are here to ascribe, to make reference toward, the worth he has of his own doing.

That is to say, he has worth even if we do not recognize it.

And as the Psalmist ascribes to the LORD glory and strength,

he emphasizes, “Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name”

Let us, this morning, worship the LORD in the splendor, the beauty, of holiness.

**Sermon -- One Thing I Desire -- Psalm 27**

When I was a young boy, I had a great difficulty in making even the smallest decisions. For example, when I had an eye examination, I agonized over whether “This?” or “This?” had a greater clarity before my eyes. When shopping with my dad at the department store for the ever-popular clip-on bow tie, I wasn't sure whether I liked the burgundy fake silk best, or whether I preferred yellow with black polka dots. One year, after the snow had fallen and the Sears Christmas Wish Book had arrived, I sensed some exasperation in my father's voice. He said to me, “Just pick one thing you want, like your brother did.”

Well. Naturally, many of the choices I made as a youngster were for mere baubles and trinkets, and really, of no consequence. But all of us, whether as adults, or as boys and girls, make important decisions, yea, even little changes in direction, that may affect our whole lives. Proverbs 20:11 (KJV) tells us ***“even a child is known by his doings, whether his work be pure, and whether it be right.”***

Imagine, for a moment, a day in which you find yourself on your knees in prayer. This, in itself, is probably not too difficult for most of those listening. But in addition, imagine if God were to say to you, as he said to Solomon of old, ***“Ask what I shall give you.” (I Kings 3:5)***. Now, I must stop here, and clarify. I do not

believe that God now speaks to us in audible voices. Indeed, whatever dreams and impressions upon the mind we may receive, we must always filter these by the Holy written Word of God, as Peter reminds us that this is a “more sure word of prophecy”. Never the less, in our holy imaginations, if such an event were to occur, how would we respond? Scripture tells us that Solomon asked for wisdom. And God honored that request, for with the exception of Jesus Christ the Righteous, very God of very God, in the flesh, this world has never seen a wiser man than Solomon, and this world never shall again see a wiser man than Solomon. As great as Solomon's desire was, in its purity, and in its passion, perhaps Solomon could have done better. Perhaps Solomon would have been wise to imitate his father, David, as recorded in Psalm 27. David, there, had but one request, and though, in one sense, his request was denied, in another sense, it was joyfully rewarded.

We see, in Psalm 27, David's request. We will examine the request, itself, in more detail, a little later. David says, however, in verse four, “*One thing have I asked of the LORD; that I will seek after.*” As God would have us examine this Psalm today, let us look at **The Context of the Request, The Content of the Request, and the Culmination of the Request**. I trust we will see, together, in the context of David's request, The LORD as David's Light, The LORD as David's Salvation, and The LORD as David's Stronghold. Then, as we examine the other facets of this jewel of a Psalm, may we see **The Content of the Request**, both in Its Nature, and Its Nuance. Finally, we will examine **The Culmination of the Request**. What was the Cause and the Purpose of this Request? David had a purpose in mind, what he hoped to accomplish with this request. It was in order that he might do two things that are part and parcel, that is to say, characteristic, of

the proper worship of Almighty God.

We shall, as I say, by God's grace, look at the request itself in a few moments, but let us first look at the **Context of the Request**. Were this a courtroom, and I a lawyer, I may even say, Let the Record Show thus.

Psalm 27 does not give many clues as to the time in David's life when this was written. He may have been king. We don't know. Psalm 18 seems to have been written after David was crowned king, and indeed, David quotes Psalm 18 in I Samuel 22, just before we are given the *last* words of David in this earthly life. But the Psalms are not necessarily chronological in order. What Psalm 27 *does* seem to indicate, from verse ten, however, is that this was written after the death of his parents. The Bible never speaks of estrangement from them; in fact they appear to have trusted him for their safety while David was on the run from Saul. Psalm 27:10 seems to speak of their passing from the earth.

In any case, David speaks of the LORD in three ways; that Jehovah is David's Light; that Jehovah is David's Salvation, and that Jehovah is David's Stronghold.

From his earliest days as a sheep herder upon the Judean hills, David knew darkness and despair and the need for the Light of the World. For a short time, he played the harp in the presence of the king. For a short time, David was the son-in-law of the king. And then one day, Saul sent his soldiers to the house Saul's daughter shared with her husband, David. Sent them to kill David. David fled. While he eventually gathered mighty men under his command, he became so weary at one point that he faked insanity, drool running down his beard, before the Philistine king and the elders of the Philistines, the great enemies of Israel. David's life as a fugitive included the day that he returned to Ziklag to find his home

burned, his family gone, the homes of his men destroyed, and all of his faithful men ready to kill him on the spot.

Though none of us may face the trying times David faced, we likely have seen, or will see, dark days in our lifetime. There are times when we say “I’m really in the dark, on this one.” We may say, in the face of job cuts, impending foreclosures, or massive health concerns, “I cannot see any further ahead; I cannot see my way out. I am clueless.” In those times, knowing that God is alive, that he is both good *and* great, is a light in the darkness to keep us from stumbling. Of Jesus Christ, John says, “In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.” When we focus upon the brilliance of Jesus Christ in all of His glory, it is such a contrast to the darkness around us that we begin to see things as God sees them. David knew the LORD was his light.

Moreover, David says the LORD is his salvation. Almighty God, Jehovah, is the Savior of the Psalmist. Recall, if you will, that it was God that saved David from the enemies of the sheep. David recognized it was God's strength in him that enabled him to kill the bear and to slay the lion. Recognize, also, that it was God that saved David from the enemies of Israel. It was God that used David's small stone to fell the God-hating giant named Goliath. It was God that caused the god of the Philistines to fall from his perch and the bodies of the Philistines to erupt in boils.

Upon the reflection of this light, and on the basis of God's salvation, David may confidently say, “Whom shall I fear?” And it is upon the basis of the fortress of God that David may say, “Of whom shall be afraid?” This is stark contrast to many of our fellow Americans today, who, in the past, said that their lives were

protected by their 401K savings plan, and their confidence was in the market, and in their homes, in their health. Putting our trust in those shifting sands *creates* fear rather than dispelling it.

It is *not* in the hard-working men and women of the United States military that I place my trust, though I am thankful, each day, for all that they sacrifice. It is *not* the money in all of Fort Knox that gives me confidence. It is *not* in the land I own, nor the livestock we feed, that gives me cause for peace of mind. It *is*, rather, the only wise sovereign God working his plan that deserves and receives my trust.

David observes the wicked, who were his enemies as they came upon him “to eat (his) flesh”. God caused them to stumble and fall. With that in mind, David knew that even though a multitude (here, “an host”) of warriors might pitch their armies against him, he would still be confident in the LORD as the strength of his life.

It is in the background of this context, of walking in the *light* of the LORD, of *confidence* in the LORD, of *trust* in the LORD, of absolute *reliance* upon the LORD and his ways that David now speaks. Let us examine **The Content of David's Request**, both in its nature, and its nuance.

In Psalm 27, verse four, we read, “One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after.” Before we continue on to the actual request, itself, let us examine **the nature of this request**.

First, **It is a singular request**. Unlike my boyhood Christmas wishes, David asks *one* thing of the LORD. This prayer, this desire, is not diffused by so many degrees of refraction. James says our prayers must be “nothing wavering.” This does not mean, however, that David failed to pray about other requests, or that his

prayer was only about asking and receiving. What it means, at least in part, is a belief that, ultimately, we have only one desire that governs all else.

Secondly, (and this also corresponds to the fervency of James, I think), **It is a persistent request**. How do we arrive at that conclusion? In the ESV, verse four uses the word, “asked”. This is really not strong enough. The KJV uses the word, “desired”. According to Strong's (#7592), this word is more than “anticipation”, and just slightly less than an “obsession”. It is an earnest, laser-focused, want. This is demonstrated in some parallel passages where the word is used. Samuel says (in **I Samuel 12:13**) to the people of Israel, these words. ***“Now, therefore, behold the king whom ye have chosen and whom ye have desired.”*** Israel pushed for a king for so long, and with such white-hot intensity, because she wanted so much to be like others, specifically like the children of Esau. In **Ecclesiastes 2:10**, Solomon uses this word of himself when he says, ***“And whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them; “I withheld not my heart from any thing.”*** He wanted something; He took it. But perhaps the best example of the use of this word is in **I Kings 1 & 2**, where the brother of Solomon, Adonijah by name, says, “I will be king.” He begins to orchestrate his own coronation, only to be stopped by the joyful exuberance of the people celebrating the completed coronation of Solomon. Prevented from assuming David's throne, Adonijah determines he will, at least, have David's young nurse, Abishag the Shunammite, as his own wife.

Let me pause for a few moments, here. Boys and girls, think to yourselves, “What do *I* desire, so earnestly that it floods all of my thoughts, and consumes, as with fire, my every waking moment?” Is it a new knife, a new tool, something pretty to wear or to hold? How about you, young adults? Is it another young

person, is it friendship, an education? Those of us who are older; we have desires, as well. Perhaps it is to well-liked, well-regarded. Perhaps it is for peace or safety, for financial stability or security. Whatever we desire in the sense that is meant here becomes obvious as we consider our searches. More on that in a few moments.

And, by the way, the things that I mentioned above are not necessarily bad things, in and of themselves. The question is whether these things should be at the top of our desires.

**Thirdly**, as we continue to consider the nature of David's request, let us make note that **his request is a *submissive* request**. His request is singular, it is persistent, but it is also submissive. I take this from the fact that the object of David's request is the LORD, God's name for himself that is often translated Yahweh. Almighty God of the Universe, and Sovereign over All; the All-knowing One, our Creator, Sustainer, and the Ancient of Days is He. David did not ask his request of just anyone. He asked “the LORD”.

Make note of something else in the nature of this request along this pattern of thought. David, while earnestly pursuing what he desired, also did not DEMAND of the LORD what he wanted, like an insolent child. God will not be held hostage, even to the ways in which he has previously worked. On the other hand, God delights in answering that request which is in complete agreement with what he has already commanded us to do, as we see later in Psalm 27.

**Finally**, with regard to the nature of David's desire, we see that this is a *sensible* request. I say this, because it is a request that recognizes God's part, and also recognizes David's part. In one sense, God never answered his request; that is, David never did become a priest before the LORD in the tabernacle. In another

sense, however, God did answer David's prayer, in that he enabled David to accomplish the *intent* of David's request, as we'll look at later when we look at the results. It is also sensible, in that David declares he will *seek after* that which he desires of the Lord. God is sovereign, but we also have responsibility.

The idea, here, in the phrase, *seek after*, is to strive after, fight for, and struggle for. Ask yourselves, this morning, “What is the one thing for which I fight, for which I struggle, for which I reach?” Put another way, if I am denied what I seek in one way, I will seek it by other means. If that fails, I will try still another route.

Having this in mind means that it is important that we have *ordinate*, or *proper*, affections. If our affections are primarily for power, for fame, for financial independence, for perfect health, for others to think well of me, etc., etc., as desires *in and of themselves*, as *prime directives*, they are *inordinate* affections. Therefore, it would be wrong to seek these affections, these desires, by other means, if I am denied what I seek in one way.

However, as we shall now see, David's desire, David's affections, and that which he would seek after, is entirely proper, inasmuch as God himself already commanded David to seek Him (Ps. 27:8). Let us turn now, from the consideration of the nature of David's request, to the nuance of David's request.

The one thing that David desired, the one thing that David would seek after, would struggle for, would reach for, is that he could “*dwell*” in the house of the Lord all of the days of his life. Let me focus, for a moment, on that word, “*dwell*”. It means that David did not just want to *know about* the house of the Lord. David did not just want to *pass by* the house of the Lord. David did not just want to *visit* the house of the Lord. David did not just want to *see inside* the house of the Lord. He



did not want, merely, *to be a guest* in the house of the LORD. David wanted to *move in, to settle in, to live* in the house of the LORD *as a pattern of life, in the presence of the LORD, surrounded by* the house of the LORD.

Speaking of ***the house of the LORD***, it is important to recall, or define, what this was, in David's day. **It was a tent!** The tabernacle was still in use. The temple, constructed in Solomon's day, was still far off. Mind you, the tabernacle was designed by God, and had rather plush layers that made up the walls. But still, it had not the glory and the finery of the temple of Solomon.

Oh, how David longed to dwell in the house of the LORD, to daily serve God, and to take the time and energy to accomplish what his heart desired – to worship God. But notice also, the nuance of immediacy. He says, “that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my LIFE!” If the listener may recall the final words of Psalm 23, there the Psalmist looks forward to dwelling in the house of the LORD **forever**. Certainly, the anticipation toward future grace is quite amazing. Paul speaks of enduring this “light” affliction in order to obtain a greater weight of glory.

Having considered, then, the **Context of David's Request**, and the **Content of David's Request**, let us now turn for a few moments to the **Culmination of David's Request**. Why did David ask and strive to dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of his life? He gives two reasons, namely, to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD, and to inquire in his temple.

What does it mean to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD? Perhaps I should say, what does gazing upon the beauty of the LORD look like, and how can we recognize if we are doing so? First, to gaze upon, or in the KJV, *to behold*, has the

idea “to contemplate, with pleasure”. Secondly, a thing of beauty is that which we never tire of viewing.

So what examples, in Scripture, do we have, of gazing upon or contemplating with pleasure, the beauty of the LORD? I am certain we could look at many examples, but let me offer **two**. Psalm 23 and Revelations 1 shall suffice.

Psalm 23 is a well-known example. “The LORD is my Shepherd,” the Psalmist says, and he proceeds to contemplate, with pleasure, the glories *of* that Shepherd. He is a providing Shepherd. I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside the still waters. We might say, WOW, to ourselves after meditating upon these truths, this picture of the LORD as my Shepherd.

Consider another example. Recognizing the One which was from the beginning, which John had already heard, had already seen with eyes, had already looked upon, had already touched, the apostle shares with us the vision of the Risen Jesus Christ in Revelation 1 (verses 13-15). He says, ***“and in the midst of the lamp stands one like a son of man, clothed with a long robe and a golden sash around his chest. The hairs of his head were white like wool, as white as snow. His eyes were like a flame of fire, his feet were like burnished bronze, refined in a furnace, and his voice was like the roar of many waters...”*** John writes more, but this is a holy description for us to contemplate, with pleasure, the beauty of the LORD.

We do the same thing, do we not, with our loved ones here on earth? Mothers may say, “Look at what the baby did today. He's so cute!” And they tell everyone all about it. Men, we who are fathers say, “That's my boy!” or “That's my

daughter!” We admire their accomplishments, and we joy in their advancement from childhood to adulthood. We never tire of such things, and we gladly think upon them. Children are familiar with this, too. Children may see something their daddy does, or their mama does, and tell others, with joy, what they think about it. We may even gaze upon the photo, or a painting, of a loved one who no longer walks by our side.

How much more should we contemplate, with pleasure, the beauty of the LORD? We may consider who he is; what he has done; what he loves; what we hates; what he will do; and what he will not do. This is exactly what David wanted. He wanted to contemplate, with pleasure, the *beauty* of the LORD.

David also wanted to dwell in the house of the LORD (all his life) in order *that he might inquire* in his temple. What does it mean to inquire? It means to plough, to break forth, to inspect, to attempt to shed light on that which is often obscured from view. As a gardener or a farmer picks up a clod of dirt that has been overturned by the plough, he exposes it to the light.

So what does it look like to inquire in this way? David has already begun. In verse 5, David answers the question of what God will likely do in the day of trouble. David is able to *answer* this question, because he has already *asked* the question. He has already inquired. Verse six explains to the reader that will exalt David's head. In verses seven and eight, he reveal that God will hear him. Verse nine speaks to the fact that God judges sin, and verse ten reassures us that God comforts and cares. How does David *know* all of this? He has inquired. He has inquired of his own experiences and relationship with God to be sure, but let us not forget that David also inquired of God's Word, what he had of it, in the Torah, the

first five books of our Old Testament.

Now, one last question we might ask ourselves regarding the Culmination of David's Request. Why is it better to dwell in the house of the LORD in order to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD, and to inquire in his temple? I would offer a couple of possibilities. First, David desires to do full time, what now is able only to do part time. I know our dear pastor has related the extreme privilege and honor he has in studying the Scriptures each week. And we know, and can tell, he does not take this lightly. Moreover, it isn't just the studying that is a pleasure, but the heightened communion with our LORD as he mulls over God's person in prayer and the ministry of the Word.

Also, David longed for the day when he might have the privilege the priest had daily, of gazing upon the beauty of the LORD, and of inquiring in the temple. Because of the affairs of state, or because of limitations of time and strength, David could not take as much time to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD as he would have liked. But he could long to do so, and he could take what time he had.

Not only do I think David's desire to dwell in the house of the LORD was from a desire for 'full-time' worship, if you will, it may also be that as David would be near God, to the place God had consecrated for himself, it would be more natural to think of how he should *fear* him, and *love* him. In that vein, **distance** *may* make the heart grow fonder, but **closeness** makes the heart beat stronger. Consider the the difference between the disciples of John the Baptizer and the disciples of Jesus, as we read of them in Matthew 9. John's disciples fasted. I'd guess from the character of John and the commands by which Jesus prohibited pride in fasting, that John's disciples were quiet in their observation of the fast. Never the less, it clearly

bothered them that Jesus and his disciples did not appear to take things as seriously. Now note Jesus' reply. ***“Can the wedding guests mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? The days will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them, and then they will fast”***. (Matthew 9:15) Investing time side by side with Jesus made the ties between them even stronger.

Then, in closing the Psalm, David further illustrates his desire to seek God and dwell in the presence of God. In verse nine, he says, *“Hide not; turn not; cast me not; Forsake me not.”* Now, we understand that in the New Testament, Jesus said, “Lo, I will be with you until the end of the age.” And, we understand from many other New Testament books that God does not forsake his own. At the same time, his staying beside us is for his own name's sake, and for his glory, not for any faithfulness on our part. For that reason, it is entirely proper to beg for mercy, and plead for the presence of God, and the knowledge of that presence. In verse eleven, he pleads with God, *“Teach me; Lead me.”* He trusts God. He desires to know God, to follow God, and to do so intimately.

His final admonition is to wait for the LORD, to be strong and of good courage. Wait, he says, on the LORD.

What can we, and what should we learn from this Psalm of David, today? We should learn of the Psalmists urgent and persistent desire and pleading to be in the very presence of the LORD, and to know, even as we are known. We should learn that the gift of the Creator himself is veritably greater than any of the gifts from the Creator. To be in the presence of Almighty God is to walk on holy ground. To be irresistibly drawn to seek the face and fellowship of God is to be the recipient of amazing and unconditional grace. To respond to the One who draws and

contemplate, with pleasure, the beauty of the LORD, and inquire of him in his very place of worship is a high and holy privilege and a delightful duty full of everlasting joy. May we beg of God for a greater desire to know him as David knew him, to love him as David loved him, and trust him as David trusted him. Of all the decisions in life that face us today, let us ever be conscious of the desire, the decision, really, to know God, and to make Him known. May God be praised.